

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, HO

SUBJECT: MARITIME AFFAIRS

1. VIRGILIO GUZMAN AND OSCAR MARTINEZ, EXECUTIVES OF THE COMPANIA NAVIERA AGUILA, S.A., CALLED ON DCOM 28 JANUARY TO PRESENT PROBLEM OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO THEIR FIRM. CONASA WAS FORMED IN 1972 AND PROVIDES SHIPPING SERVICE BETWEEN MIAMI AND PUERTO CORTES. CONASA OFFICIALS SAID AMERICAN SHIPPING COMPANY OWNS 79 PERCENT OF FIRM AT PRESENT. BALANCE HELD BY HONDURAN PRIVATE CITIZENS AND CENTRAL AMERICAN BANK FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION.

2. GUZMAN AND MARTINEZ SAID THAT CONASA OPERATING AT SLIGHTLY ABOVE BREAK-EVEN POINT AT PRESENT TIME. PROBLEM FACING FIRM RESULTS FROM FACT THAT APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF CARGO IT TRANSPORTS IS BOUND FOR NICARAGUA AND, ACCORDING TO GUZMAN AND MARTINEZ, ALL NICARAGUA-BOUND CARGO MUST BE TRANSPORTED BY THE MARINA MERCANTE NICARAGUENSE (MAMENIC) AS OF 10 FEBRUARY. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER GON WILL PROHIBIT SHIPMENT OF NICARAGUA-BOUND CARGO ON NON-NICARAGUAN BOTTOMS OR WHETHER GON HAS INFORMED CONASA THAT NO MORE NICARAGUAN CARGO WILL BE SHIPPED VIA CONASA UNLESS IT REDUCES ITS FREIGHT RATES. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION MANAGUA
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COULD DEVELOP ON THIS MATTER.

3. CONASA EXECS SAID THAT THEY WANT THE GOH TO GRANT CONASA EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO TRANSPORT ALL HONDURAN-BOUND CARGO ON THE MIAMI-PUERTO CORTES ROUTE. IF NOT GRANTED THAT CONCESSION, CONASA'S ONLY VESSEL WILL BE PLACED UNDER CHARTER IN EARLY FEBRUARY ON A VENEZUELAN ROUTE FROM MIAMI. CONASA'S PRINCIPAL COMPETITOR ON THE MIAMI-PUERTO CORTES ROUTE IS COORDINATED CARIBBEAN TRANSPORT (CCT) WHICH OPERATES UNDER THE BRITISH FLAG BUT IS REPORTED TO BE A WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF TRANSWORLD SHIPPING CORPORATION OF NEW YORK.

4. GUZMAN AND MARTINEZ SAID THAT THEY HAD ALREADY SPOKEN WITH THE GOH MINECON REGARDING THE CONCESSION BUT DID NOT EXPECT A RAPID DECISION. THEREFORE, AND IN VIEW OF THE AMERICAN CAPITAL INVESTED IN CONASA, THEY REQUESTED THAT THE EMBASSY INTERCEDE WITH THE GOH TO OBTAIN EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FOR EIGHT YEARS ON CONASA'S BEHALF. EMBASSY REPLIED THAT IT WOULD STUDY MATTER. ANOTHER CONASA OFFICIAL, RICK ESTEBAN, TO CALL AT EMBASSY JANUARY 30.

5. COMMENT: FROM INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CONASA, EMBASSY SEES LITTLE MERIT TO COMPANY'S REQUEST. RICK ESTEBAN'S PRESENTATION WILL BE REPORTED.
SANCHEZ

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